

Nonprofit and Philanthropic Studies Seminar (26:834:665.02) [3 credits]

Course Description

This course is a multidisciplinary exploration into the study of nonprofit organizations and philanthropy (increasingly referred to as Nonprofit and Philanthropic Studies (NPS)). In the course we will explore a broad range of topics relating to the study of nonprofits and philanthropy.

You should be aware that NPS draws from many disciplines. Consequently, comprehensive coverage of topics relating to nonprofits and philanthropy (including civil society) is impossible in the course of a single semester—or, even possibly two! Therefore, my goal in this course is not be comprehensive in my coverage of topics, but to provide you with a sufficiently thorough introduction to key topics so that you can successfully craft and pursue research question(s) that make (or have the potential to make) intellectual contributions to the field.

Accomplishing this will require a great deal of reading on your part. As such, it is critical that you review the assigned reading materials before each class.

Learning Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, students should:

- Understand major issues and topics studied by scholars in NPS.
- Be able to discuss/critique theories, research designs, and (to some degree) methods utilized in NPS.
- Be capable of developing their own research question related to the study of nonprofit organizations and/or philanthropy and should be able to ground that question in relevant literature.

Requirements

Assignment 1: Discussion Leader

Each student will lead at least one discussion. Discussion leaders should provide an overview of the readings, introduce questions and issues for examination, and facilitate the seminar discussion for that class session. Discussions should cover (what presenter's believe to be) the most important aspects of the readings for that class. This presentation should be approximately 45 minutes to one hour in length. It is the discussion leader's responsibility to prepare and present the class with questions and observations that highlight the main issues, strengths, weaknesses, controversies, and gaps in the readings for that week (students who are not serving as a discussion leader should come to class with at least two questions/comments on the readings in order to help facilitate discussions). The role of a discussion leader requires an integrated and thorough understanding of the readings; however, each student is also expected to come fully prepared to engage the material and participate in the discussion.

Assignment 2: Extended Conference Presentation (ECP)

Each student will be responsible for making an "extended conference presentation" on a topic of their choosing. (Note: This should also be the topic of your final paper). The presentation should be approximately 30-45 minutes in length. This is your opportunity to deliver an outline of what you expect to focus on for your final research paper; as such, during the presentation you may choose to focus on:

- Why this topic is important.
- What bodies of literature you will consult.

*This is a sample syllabus. Students should always obtain syllabi for their current courses from their professors.
(v.10/16/23)*

- What theories you are considering.
- What previous research has shown.
- What methodologies you believe are best suited to answer your research question(s).
- Issues/concerns you have, e.g., issues with access to data, theoretical/methodological concerns.
- Questions you have about your topic.

Assignment 3: Final Paper and Peer Review

Your final paper will build off your Extended Conference Presentation. In completing this paper, it is expected that you will do some formal reading outside of the required readings for this class. However, some of the literature that you will need to draw on for writing this paper should be included in the assigned readings for this course. Please keep in mind that this assignment is not intended to be a textbook-like tour of the literature on a topic. Instead, you should be developing your abilities to understand, critically analyze, and build on the NPS literature—not simply rehash what we already know. In this way, the structure of this assignment is broad.

In some instances, students will develop a critical literature review, in other instances students will develop an empirical (qualitative or quantitative) study, and in other instances students will develop (or, extend) a theoretical framework. In all instances, though, there should be in-depth coverage of the relevant literature on the topic, as this is what the focus of this course is on—developing a critical understanding the literature in the field of NPS. Your final paper should be approximately 20 double spaced pages in length (+/-). You should develop this paper with the expectation that it could (and, in some cases, will) become a publishable product (or, conference paper).

Peer Review: One of the most important service duties of a scholar is to review colleagues' research. To hone your critical reviewing skills and to get you in the practice of thinking and writing as a reviewer, you will serve as an anonymous reviewer for the final paper of one of your classmates. Specifically, you will provide a constructively critical review of the paper (approximately 3 – 5 double-spaced pages in length). I will forward the (blinded) review to the author. You will have until the end of finals week to incorporate any changes that you receive during the peer review process into your final submitted version of your paper.

Schedule / Outline of Topics

Section I: Introduction and Overview

- Week 1: History and Legal Dimensions
- Week 2: The Emergence of a Field
- Week 3: The Study of Nonprofits and Philanthropy
- Week 4: Classification and Categorization
- Week 5: Theory and Data Considerations

Section II: Disciplinary Perspectives

- Week 6: Economic and Sociological Perspectives
- Week 7: Political Science and Public Administration Perspectives

Section III: Stakeholder Relationships

- Week 8: Membership Associations and Volunteering
- Week 9: Charitable Giving

Section IV: Equity and Effectiveness

- Week 10: Issues of Equity
- Week 11: Mission, Governance, and Organizational Effectiveness

Section V: Methods of inquiry in Nonprofit and Philanthropic Studies (NPS) Scholarship

- Week 12: Qualitative Methods in NPS Research
- Week 13: Quantitative Methods in NPS Research
- Final Presentations

Texts / Materials / Resources

The selection of textbooks and readings will vary by instructor. Listed below are some of the possible textbooks, materials, and resources an instructor may select for this course:

- Powell, W. W., & Bromley, P. (eds.) (2020). *The Nonprofit Sector: A Research Handbook*, 3rd edition. New Haven: Stanford University Press.